The Research – Practice Connection
Lessons From the Interstitial Space

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Session Agenda

Background

Summary of keynote address

Case scenarios of working from the middle

Discussion
Background

Teaching and Curriculum Development in the Health Professions

Director of the Nebraska State Adult Literacy Resource Center

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My Argument

- Reject:
  - Dichotomy of research and practice
  - Marketplace model of research to practice
- Research and practice are in a dialogical, dialectical relation
  - Research and theory are a means and not an end of our practice
- Knowledge derived flows from neither one nor the other but the work of them in application
Summary of Key Points

- Our work is grounded in, arises from, and returns to the world of practice
- Research and practice are dynamic aspects of a greater whole
- The inter-relationship of research and practice reveals the specific, contextual, and political nature of the problem
- The relationship represents commitment to lifelong learning
Working Within the “Interstitial Spaces”

- Both researcher and practitioner
- Align and partner with practice contexts
- Let research emerge from the practice
- Knowledge derived reflects both the particular and the general
The Research - Practice Connection

Practice  Research
Case Studies of Working in the Middle

Developing integrated curriculum

Fostering change through teacher professional development

Teaching through online, problem-based consensus groups
Developing More Integrated Curriculum

- Practice context: *Developmental education in community college*
- Problem: *Making curriculum more meaningful and relevant for adult learners*
- Theory: *How people come to know*
  - Learning as meaning-making
  - Contextual learning
  - Experience-based learning
  - Discipline-based learning
- Outcomes:
  - *College needed to develop a formal DE program*
  - *Organizational issues; professional identity*
Professional Development for Adult Education Teachers

• Practice context: Fostering change in practice through ABE/GED teacher training institutes

• Problem: Increase the use of knowledge gained from PD in practice

• Theory: Motivation to learn; self-efficacy; behavioral change

• Outcomes:
  – Change in teacher practices, Use of one another to address barriers in implementing change
  – Power of learning circles, Commitment to change strategy
Collaborative Learning in Online Environments

- **Practice Context:** Graduate-level, online course on adult learning
- **Problem:** Teach adult learning online through problem-based, consensus groups
- **Theory:** Collaborative learning; group dynamics experience-based, problem-based learning
- **Outcomes:**
  - Improved performance; Higher levels of interaction, work grounded in content
  - Greater understanding of dynamics of online groups
Conclusions

• Research and practice are iterative, cyclical and dialogical processes
• What we come to know arises from their inter-relationship
• Knowledge derived is both concrete and specific, and abstract and general
• Relationship highlights the intrinsically, social, political, and moral use and production of knowledge
• Calls into question the very usefulness of the dichotomy of research and practice
Discussion